

White Sturgeon - Prehistoric Giants

North America's largest and longest-lived freshwater fish, the white sturgeon, is an Idaho native. Growing to 12 feet and living up to 100 years, white sturgeon are found in several of Idaho's larger rivers. Catching one is considered by many to be the ultimate fishing experience.

Popular white sturgeon fishing destinations along the Snake River include Hells Canyon Dam to Lewiston, C.J. Strike Dam to Swan Falls Reservoir, Bliss Dam to C.J. Strike Reservoir, and below Swan Falls Dam.

Whether you're new to the sport, or a veteran sturgeon angler, it remains important to use "low-impact" fishing techniques to insure the continuation of this great fishery.

Use only barbless hooks – which are required by law – in sizes 7/0 to 13/0. Pliers can be used to pinch down hook barbs; this practice makes hook removal easier and minimizes damage to a sturgeon's fleshy mouth.

Tie the sinker to a dropper line on a sliding swivel using line at least ten pound test lighter than the main line (see inset at right). This minimizes the chances of leaving a baited hook rig snagged to the bottom if break-off occurs. Beginning in 2011, the sliding sinker will be required when sturgeon fishing.

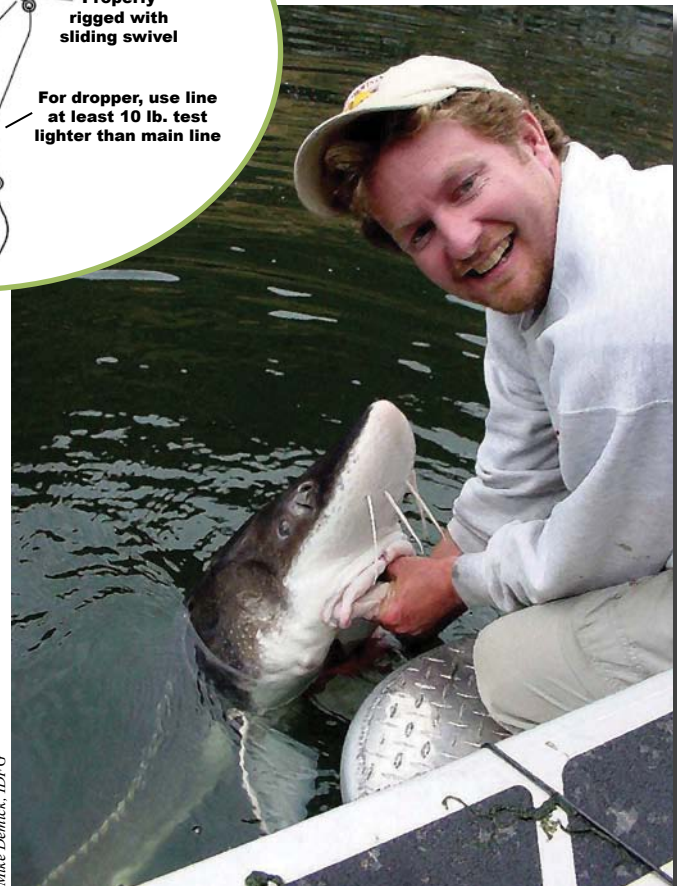
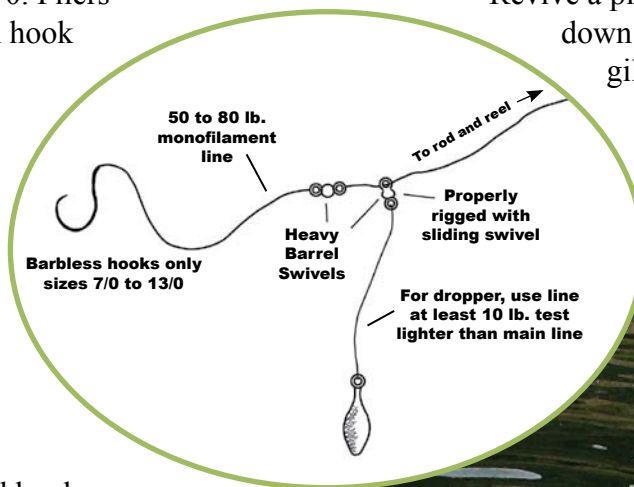
Avoid overstressing the fish during the fight by using 50 to 80 lb. test monofilament line or 130 to 150 lb. test superbraid line to work the fish quickly to shore or boat. Monofilament line generally has much higher abrasion resistance and stretch that makes it much more forgiving when fighting large fish. Use a heavy rod and quality reel capable of landing large fish quickly. A quality sturgeon reel is

well machined with a smooth drag and line capacity of at least 250 yards of proper line. Be realistic about your chances of landing a large sturgeon when choosing a fishing hole, especially when fishing without a boat.

Keep the fish in the water (it's the law). Sturgeon have only cartilage, not bones, and may be injured if lifted out of the water. Never pull a fish up on shore for any reason. Gently roll the fish belly-up to remove the hook; a tired sturgeon will almost always remain calm when held in this manner. Never tie a fish by the tail, as a tail-roped fish will struggle and can easily injure itself if it starts thrashing.

A great sturgeon photo is best taken with you in the water with the fish. Keep water flowing over the sturgeon's gills at all times while snapping a picture.

Revive a played-out fish by rolling it belly down and allow water to flow over its gills until it swims away. Never touch the gills.



Mike Demick, IDFG

Watch the low-impact sturgeon fishing video on the Fish and Game website:
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>

